

539 BROWN YOUTHS
AND VIRGINS

*Memu wai o nggori ka Kula;
Au solia mai loaloa;
Au solia na ndrau ni thevunga:
Memu wai o nggori ka Kula.*

This is your broth, Sirs the Circumcised;
I give it from the wilderness;
I give the leaf of the *thevunga*:
This is your broth, Sirs the Circumcised.

*Chant used when taking food to youths
in isolation after circumcision.*

858 Now comes a difficult period for the boy. From the age of
855 about seven until his initiation between eight and thirteen
years, his life is uncomfortable. He is ignored, teased,
tormented and overworked. He is called by the degrading,
[578] humorous, obscene term *pilo* (pronounced pi'-lo), and a *pilo*
he is in the eyes of the whole community.

A *pilo* is neither child nor man. He is no longer allowed to
play in mixed gangs, and yet he is still excluded from all the
interesting masculine activities of his father and older brothers
—the preparation of food for the earth oven, sailing, house and
canoe building, adult games, and love affairs. His growing
masculinity brings about bars that separate him from girls of
all ages. Women are inaccessible to him for they bestow their
favors upon the initiated. The idea of an affair with a *pilo*
is quite ridiculous to them. Yet he is not a man, and he is
definitely separated from circumcised youths and older men.
He is thwarted and he suffers from feelings of inferiority,
becomes self conscious, awkward, silent, and retiring. His
plight is highly amusing to the community, especially to the
young women and swaggering initiated youths who amuse
themselves by ridiculing and spurning him. The only emo-
tional outlet for boys of this age is in masturbation or homo-
sexual relationships with other *pilos*. Such relationships are
absent among men, according to both male and female
informants.

858 But a *pilo* is useful. He is no longer a liability to the com-
857 munity, but has become its youngest asset. Chores he learned

enforced between brothers and sisters and parallel cousins of opposite sex. Apparently many girls as well as boys masturbate, and young mothers who are nursing babies—and hence [836] forbidden sexual intercourse—occasionally do so also. According to the girls themselves, homosexual relationships among girls are not rare. These relationships usually begin by imitation of other girls before a girl's first menstruation. Practically all married women on Kambara say they have had such relationships before marriage, but afterwards they discontinued them without difficulty.

882 From the age of eleven, however, girls are usually more or
[585] less guarded by their parents, for virginity at marriage is prized. A girl's virginity is usually tested on her wedding night by her husband's female relatives, and the next morning the results of the test are made public. Fear of ridicule and the anger of her husband's relatives when she marries prevent some girls from accepting lovers before marriage, which usually does not take place until a girl is at least eighteen years old. Moreover, virgins are afraid of being deflorated. They are not sure just how the act is accomplished although they have witnessed sexual intercourse.

836 There is considerable difference in the degree of pre-marital
178 freedom found on the various islands in southern Lau. The most powerful force acting against pre-marital freedom is the virginity test. Although this custom is not observed at every wedding in Lau it is the rule on conservative islands like Fulanga, where standards of morality are relatively strict. The Lauans, however, try to keep the custom secret from western visitors because of fear of disapproval and ridicule. In general, the native emphasis on chastity has tended to break down in relation to the degree of Tongan and western influence. Among the islands visited, the greatest freedom was found on Mothe, which lies at the trade cross-roads for canoe traffic in southern Lau, and which was formerly the point of departure of sailing canoes to Tonga.